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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TRIPOLI 000436

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/MAG, AF/SPG

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [LY](#)  
SUBJECT: LIBYA: DARFUR CONFERENCE ATMOSPHERICS

REF: (A) TRIPOLI 417

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. A Libyan-organized conference on Darfur April 28-29 was a substantive success (Reftel), but the scheduling challenges posed by a last minute decision by the Leader to fly all delegates to Sirte to meet with him exemplify the capricious environment in which even Libya's most senior diplomats operate.

African Affairs Secretary Ali Treiki pulled out all stops, organizing the conference in Tripoli's most expensive venue, the Corinthia Hotel, and bedecking it with all the trappings (flags, signs, simultaneous translation in three languages etc.), but had to smile his way through an eight hour delay in start time (from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m.) in order to fly all conferees to Sirte and back, with a lengthy delay in Sirt waiting for the Leader. Once the conference actually started, most delegations expressed satisfaction with Libya's role as host, though the Sirte misadventure and ever-shifting schedule could make many think twice before attending another conference in Libya. END SUMMARY.

CONFERENCE START DELAYED TO ACCOMMODATE SIRT DIVERSION

¶2. (C) Treki informed early-arriving delegates, including UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Representative Salim Ahmed Salim, on April 27 that Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi had invited visiting delegations to Sirte the following day. Treki told delegates that buses would leave from the Corinthia Hotel for the airport at 1030. When buses showed up at 1115, Protocol had to scramble to find the approximately 100 delegates. Delegates left the hotel around 1145, arrived at Tripoli airport at 1215, and eventually boarded a chartered Libyan Airbus A-300 named "Qardabia." (Note: The airplane was named after an early 20th century battle with the Italians that was coincidentally being commemorated in Sirte that day and was the proximate reason for the Leader's absence from Tripoli. The delegates had time to reflect on this historical coincidence as the sat on the tarmac for another hour before finally arriving in Sirte around ¶1400. End Note.)

¶3. (C) In Sirte delegates were shown two reservoirs and a variety of pipes belonging to the Great Manmade River Project, before being fed a large lunch in a reservoir-side tent. After lunch delegates discovered that while the Great Man Made River has many pipes, none in the vicinity of the reservoir led to toilet facilities. They then endured an additional two hour wait until the Libyan Leader arrived and gave a twenty minute talk to the attendees.

QADHAFI LECTURES FOREIGN DELEGATIONS NOT TO OVEREMPHASIZE DARFUR

¶4. (C) Qadhafi stressed familiar themes during his 20 minute lecture to the delegates, claiming that there are more serious conflicts in the world than Darfur, and questioning the motives of the international community for drawing so much attention to it. African problems require African solutions, said the Libyan leader. Qadhafi cast scorn on the Darfur rebels as well as on UN peacekeeping troops, alluding to reports of their sexual misconduct in other countries. He concluded by thanking the delegates for their interest. UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson presented a five-minute response on behalf of the international community in which he pointed out that the Darfur conflict threatens both regional and global security.

STRONG LEADERSHIP FROM DIPLOMAT TREKI KEEPS CONFERENCE ON TRACK

¶5. (C) Though the delegates were clearly annoyed and exhausted by the Sirte delay, once the conference finally began at 2300 in Tripoli most delegations expressed satisfaction at the professional caliber of the proceedings. (Comment: Had the conference started at 1500 as originally planned, they might actually have been impressed by the Libyans' ability to organize the event. Instead they were left with the mixed impression of professionals like Ali Treki trying to run a serious conference, even as the Libyan Leader undermined efforts by capriciously inserting himself into the event in as time-consuming a way as possible. End Comment.) A detailed discussion of conference proceedings is reported ref A.

LIBYAN PRESS: QADHAFI URGES RECALCITRANT LEADERS TO HELP AFRICA

¶6. (C) Libyan press did their best to spin the Sirt meeting as Qadhafi's valiant attempt to urge recalcitrant foreign leaders to do more to stop the violence in Darfur. Press accounts hailed Qadhafi's leadership in keeping foreign troops out of Africa and criticized efforts by the international community to deploy UN peacekeepers to Darfur. The Libyan state-run press agency "quoted" a significantly mangled text of the conference

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conclusions, deleting a carefully negotiated mention of the transition to a UN/AU hybrid operation and adding repeated references to the international community's appreciation for "brother Leader's" leadership of the Africa dossier.

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